
Lived Experience Reflection

AI, Digital Ethics & Trauma-Informed Lawyering

Key reflections I can bring to the conversation from lived experience and from thinking about how people experience legal, health and support systems.

Key reflections

Reduce repetition, but don't remove the person's voice.

Technology could carry agreed information forward so people do not continually have to retell traumatic experiences, while still giving them control over what matters to their story.

Help people navigate the system rather than expecting them to speak “system language.”

It can be difficult to know what information is relevant, where it belongs and how the system expects it to be communicated. AI could help people organise what they already know and understand possible pathways without taking ownership of their story away from them.

Information collected is not the same as being heard.

A service may already hold information about a person, but trauma-informed practice still requires permission, listening, explanation and an opportunity for the person to say what matters to them.

Capture experience during the journey, not only afterwards.

Instead of relying only on evaluations at the end, we could recognise the moments when trust grows, communication breaks down, something works or a barrier appears.

Don't mistake difficulty participating for unwillingness.

Trauma, disability, caring responsibilities or overwhelm can affect memory, communication, form completion and response times. AI or automated systems should not automatically interpret these things as disengagement, unreliability or lack of credibility.

Lived experience should be involved before technology is designed.

People with lived experience can help identify the problem, decide what should and should not be automated, co-design the approach, test it and identify unintended consequences.

A lived-experience lens

What did it feel like?

What did it sound like?

What did it look like?

This lens could be used to identify where trauma-informed practice is working and where it is breaking down, without turning lived experience into another administrative exercise.

A question I want to bring into the room

“When we design AI for legal services, are we teaching the person how to communicate in a way the system understands — or are we teaching the system how to understand the person?”

The principle underneath it

Use technology to reduce the burden of navigating the system without replacing the human connection that helps a person feel heard, understood and included.